

The following interview was conducted on behalf of the oral history program of the Washington county museum and Century High School. The interviewee is Mrs. Kastberg and the interviewers are Erika Newton and Stacie Elkins.

Erika: So, Tell me about your experiences during the Vietnam War

Kastberg: Experiences related to Vietnam?

E: Yeah any time in the time period of 64-75 in Hillsboro. Anything that you remember.

K: In far as school we were studying about the war and I remember being in my senior history class every single day we were to give reports, kind of like a newspaper report on what was going on in Vietnam. So, we talked about it on a daily basis and I remember being kind of impacted on that just everyday there was almost like a body count of how many of our young men were coming home in body bags and we would often see on the news these big transport planes where the back was open and caskets were coming out- and that was on a daily basis-constantly and continued on through college. I graduated from Hillsboro High School in 1966 so during that time period I was in my senior year moving into college. In college, although I didn't go to college here I wasn't far away it was only an hour and a half or so drive away. But we continually had to worry about our young men being drafted so and we always worried about their draft status. I had a twin brother and he always had to worry about his draft status and my freshmen year in college I got engaged to a man who was a little older. I also went to college with him and he was continually worried about his draft status. He was a senior in college and you always had to worry about your goals and status and if you were deferred or not and what you were going to do about that, and eventually he did get drafted.

E: Do you remember the draft law that was in effect?

K: Well, all young men, 18 or older had to be registered for the draft and I believe they still have to register for the draft, but at that time there was...there for a while, as you became eligible for the draft you were drafted. There was a point where there were actually two numbers, and then the priority and the higher, the lower the number, if you were number one you would be first to be drafted. I remember my brothers draft number being 39. and he decided to enlist in the National Guard he had a friend with the exact same birthday that took his chance and never got drafted. And he didn't, there was always a mad dash for trying to enlist before they actually drafted you. Higher chance of farmers to go to Vietnam than, my husband ended up when he got drafted, he signed up for the navy and he was an aircraft carrier off of Vietnam but he was actually never there, and had to go into the jungle and fight so there was always some juggling with that, a lot of people were trying to avoid that.

E: So you had family members or peers go to Vietnam?

K: Well, my fiancé ended up going off the coast in the navy and there were always schoolmates, particularly in college. I remember in my senior year, somebody being drafted coming back and he was quite a bit older because he had been in Vietnam four

years, he had ended out his experience in Vietnam and he was in the jungles fighting. And that was probably most memorable talking to somebody in first hand but threes a lot of people we talked to about that experience. My husband's best friend went and was in the jungle so I always had a lot of dialogue with that person.

E: Do you remember how the Vets were treated when they came back?

K: Everyone I saw, the people around here were really good to the Veterans and really seemed to be really respectful of them. And careful. We didn't see a lot of protests, I don't think in this area We did see some in Portland State area, In Hillsboro I don't remember being impacted or hearing about a lot of protest it was more like on the news at Portland State or the major colleges in California there was a lot. Of course, I'm not sure time line wise but there was Kent State and so many different things that were always high profile on the news and Jane Fonda and threes a lot of different things during that point that I didn't see on our part anything but respect for the Veterans and nobody particularly wanted...people talked about it in a macho sort of way, fighting the Viet Cong, but I saw more people want to avoid that, I didn't end up knowing anyone directly that was a draft dodger I knew friends of friends and heard all kinds of messages and stuff on that. There were always rumors that there were certain kids that did you know that so and so went to Canada, and I knew them, but more of an acquaintance sort of thing that went to Canada. And they were frowned on in this area in my opinion and the people that I hung out with they were frowned on a lot more than people that went and fought in Vietnam and came back. The draft -dodgers seemed more negative than that It seemed a quite a bit later when it became popular to be against the Vietnam War, where the Vets were frowned on, but when they came back I didn't see anything but them being embraced and glad that they were alive because so many people didn't come back alive. In this area I thought Veterans were well respected and embraced the fact that they came back alive because a lot of people didn't.

Vets
acc. to
Jan
Kastberg

E: Do you remember the people of Hillsboro mostly being pro or against the war?

K: People I knew ^{was} ~~were~~ pro; nobody like the war I mean it was a terrible thing. Except young people that I was involved in didn't particularly want to go to the jungle and fight, but they also didn't want to be draft dodgers. I thought that the people in Hillsboro...I don't know if pro war is the right thing but they supported the war.

E: Do remember any charity drives or anything that was done to help soldier's and/ or their families?

K: I don't remember anything real specifically. I remember media wise they were talking about idea of people sending care packages, but I don't know if it was directly Hillsboro and such.

E: Were you aware of more about drug use during this time than before?

K: Actually in my senior year we started hearing more about drug use. I didn't hear much about it. I remember dating a guy and the rumors were that he went downtown Portland, this evil place where there was a lot of drug use. We didn't see a lot of drug use here, there is a lot of drinking and keggers and that type of stuff but actual drug use or a lot of marijuana went on about the time I was graduating high school. We moved into college again I went to college, I went through college in three years I don't, I remember going to parties, but I never saw a lot of drug use, marijuana wasn't at all. People were drinking, but they weren't using a lot of marijuana or acid. When I started teaching I started having a lot of students that were using acid, and a lot of marijuana that seemed to be higher of use then. I think drugs were a lot more reckless were kind of not in this area as heavy. In Portland we kind of heard of them, but just started hearing about them in 60, 70, but I never personally saw it firsthand people using drugs at parties.

E: Did you see any subcultures like hippies?

K: Yeah, I remember there being hippies they were definitely high profile. Eugene was kind of the core there was a lot of people in Eugene that was kind of more into that, but we still saw people around that were hippies and there were news about them, and there was all kinds of cultures, subcultures popping up and coffee houses and all that sort of thing. It was kind of...Portland, Portland was more of that sort of thing

hippies

E: Do remember people's popular view on the hippies or their actions?

K: I remember people being really...I don't know if anti is the right word, but being fairly...what's wrong with them and you know pretty negative about them. And again I think I was a little early on that so probably more popular about the time I started teaching not in the 66-69 that much.

E: Do remember the type of music that was popular during the time?

K: I'm not good at that sort of stuff. I certainly remember all the media on Woodstock and music things like that. You know free love and flower children. And I remember all that, but I don't remember specific names and stuff. I'm not very good at that.

E: What about religious changes like were people more religious before the war or after?

K: Religion...ooh...I probably remember it being shifted to more anti- religion and establishment. I'm not particularly...although I think some cults and stuff discussed about religion so it seemed like it was because it wasn't mainstream traditional type of religion a lot of people didn't particularly think of it as a religion full of God. And so marriage partners were kind of a flexed traditional religion sort of thing. And I probably personally thought it was more anti-war that I think got a lot more people into that body. It was just more natural, more with nature and so they probably perceived it more a religious sort of thing, but as far as mainstream traditional probably more thought it wasn't.

E: Now that you look back do you think that the media covered the war accurately? With body counts or what was happening?

K: To the readers the different reports of massacre and stuff came out and those sort of stuff the media I think covered those accurately. I have no...Then and now the media picks up on things drills it in the ground. And so how accurate is that ya know? I certainly think they covered it. I mean it was high profile and they certainly didn't try to hide it. It was a continual sort of thing like I said every single day the Vietnam War, pictures would come in and there was no way that we understood what was going on in the jungles over there and to this day none of us can understand even with all the war movies and all that I don't think anyone can understand how they used to do that particularly knowing about people with post traumatic war syndrome and all that sort of thing that went on with that so I don't know what then. I certainly was debating it. I later thought that the only reason why there were some things not reported was because it was hidden from the press, it was that or I don't know or dramatized